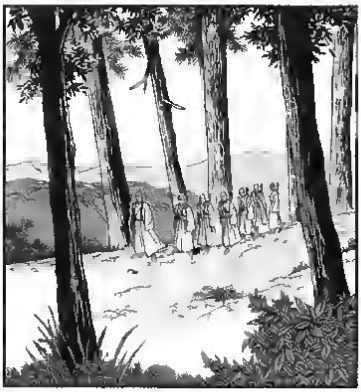
CH.10: NIGHT RAIN OF XIAOXIANG

第十話 瀟湘夜雨

TN: XIAOXIANG IS THE OTHER NAME OF THE XIANJIANG RIVER IN HUNAN PROVINCE

FROM WIKIPEDIA, "XIAOXIANG IS LESS A PRECISE GEOGRAPHIC ENTITY THAN A CONCEPT. XIAOXIANG IS USED IN LITERATURE FOR SYMBOLIC PURPOSES, IN PART BECAUSE THIS WAS A SIGNIFICANT AREA, WHICH AT LEAST THROUGH THE SONG DYNASTIC ERA CHINA WAS STILL CONSIDERED A WILD PLACE FULL OF MALARIA, BARBARIANS AND WILD BEASTS. THIS REGION LATER CAME TO SYMBOLICALLY REPRESENT THE UNJUST EXILE OF A TALENTED MINISTER OR GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL BY AN UNAPPRECIATIVE RULER. THUS, THE NAME CAME TO BE PERMEATED WITH THE THEMES OF SEPARATION AND ACCUSATIONS THAT THE SOVEREIGNS WERE LISTENING TO THE WRONG MEN. EVEN THE NAME XIAOXIANG HAS A MELANCHOLY RING.



MASTER DING MIAN
DON'T SAY SUCH NONSENSE!

MASTER, YILIN HAS BEEN MISSING FOR AN ENTIRE NIGHT. COULD SOMETHING HAVE HAPPENED TO HER?

SO MAYBE SHE'S ALREADY ARRIVED AHEAD OF US
SHE KNOWS WE'RE HEADING THERE
HURRY AND HEAD TO MT HENG CITY!

YI GUANG
THERE'S NEWS OF YILIN!

M-MASTER!

WHAT?

THE RETURNING GEESE...!

ACCORDING TO SENIORS FROM MT TAI SECT, YILIN WAS CAPTURED AND IS CURRENTLY BEING HELD AT A CERTAIN INN CALLED THE RETURNING GEESE!

HOW DARE ANYONE LAY THEIR HANDS ON MY DISCIPLE!

HURRY, WE'RE GOING TO RESCUE HER!

BROTHER LINGHU!

——噹——
——噹——

嗤！

HAHAHA! YOU SAID YOU'RE NUMBER 2 WHEN IT COMES TO FIGHTING WHILE SEATED SO WHAT ABOUT FIGHTING WHILE YOU'RE SPRAWLING ON THE GROUND?
YOU'VE LOST!
LOOK AT THE STATE YOU'RE IN AND YOU STILL DARE SAY I'VE LOST?
WHAT WERE THE TERMS OF OUR FIGHT AGAIN?
THE ONE WHOSE ASS LEAVES THE SEAT FIRST-

LOOK, MY AXE IS STILL FIRMLY PLANTED ON THE BENCH, WHERE IS YOU HAVE STOOD UP!

!!

TRULY, BRAINS OVER BRAWNS! I LIKE THAT YOUNG FELLOW'S GUTS!
HAHAHA!

H-HE KNEW...!

HEY LITTLE NUN, YOU CAN COME DOWN NOW AND CONGRATS ON GETTING A NEW DISCIPLE!

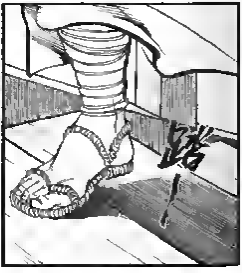
BRAT, THE NEXT TIME I SEE YOU I'LL FUCKING CUT YOUR HEAD OFF! YA HEAR ME YOU LITTLE NUN?!

PFT!
HAAH...
I HAVE TO TEND TO YOUR WOUNDS!
YOU'RE BADLY INJURED
BROTHER LINGHU!

IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF ME THAT HE'S IN THIS STATE

IT'S FINE. JUST A FLESH WOUND WON'T DIE FROM THAT!

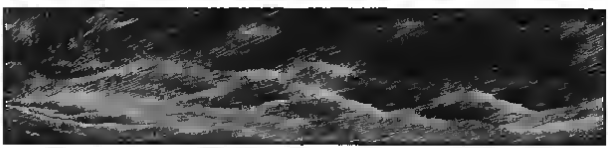
GIMME ALCOHOL AND NONE OF THE WOUNDS MATTER ANY MORE
HEY. GET ME A BOWL OF WINE WOULD YA



HEH
LUO RENJIE
QINGCHENG SECT DISCIPLE

IT'S THE BASTARDS FROM QINGCHENG SECT! TALK ABOUT BAD LUCK.
!!

LOOK, THIS LITTLE NUN HAS BEEN TEMPTED BY LUST!



MT HENG CITY

UGH, I'VE BEEN WALKING AROUND THE CITY FOR HALF A DAY
AND THERE'S NOT EVEN A SINGLE TRACE OF QINGCHENG SECT .

沙沙...

沙沙...

有事发生!

茶
沙沙...

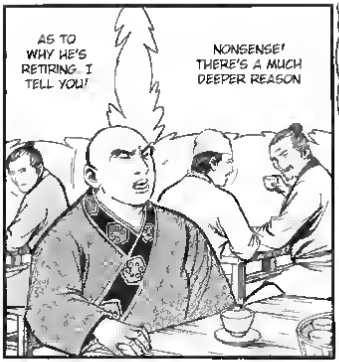
MIGHT AS WELL TRY MY LUCK AND SEE IF I CAN SNIFF OUT SOME INFO IN THE INN.
沙沙...

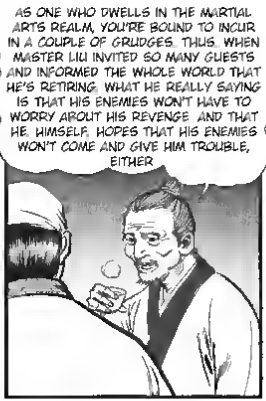
HAVE A SEAT

IT'S STILL THREE DAYS UNTIL THE CEREMONY, AND GUESTS HAVE ALREADY FILLED THE WHOLE TOWN.
MASTER LIU'S RETIREMENT CEREMONY IS GOING TO BE A REALLY BIG PARTY

AND IS ON THE PEAK OF HIS MARTIAL ARTS PROWESS RIGHT NOW. SO WHY THE SUDDEN RETIREMENT?
THAT SAID THOUGH, MASTER LIU IS ONLY IN HIS 50S

THE SOUTH HENG SECT HAS ALREADY GOT A GREAT REPUTATION BY ITSELF. AND ON TOP OF THAT IT'S PART OF THE ALLIANCE. WHO WOULDN'T WANT TO BE ON THEIR GOOD SIDE?

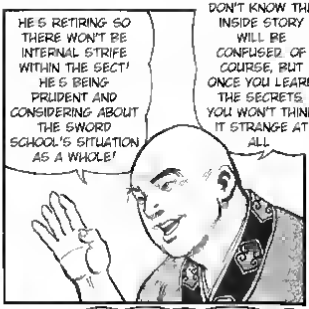

AS TO WHY HE'S RETIRING, I TELL YOU!
NONSENSE! THERE'S A MUCH DEEPER REASON


AS ONE WHO DWELLS IN THE MARTIAL ARTS REALM, YOU'RE BOUND TO INCUR IN A COUPLE OF GRUDGES. THUS, WHEN MASTER LILI INVITED SO MANY GUESTS AND INFORMED THE WHOLE WORLD THAT HE'S RETIRING, WHAT HE REALLY SAYING IS THAT HIS ENEMIES WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HIS REVENGE, AND THAT HE, HIMSELF, HOPES THAT HIS ENEMIES WON'T COME AND GIVE HIM TROUBLE, EITHER

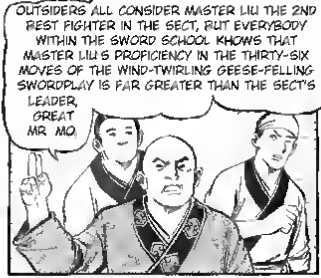
BAH! WHY DOES SOMEONE HAVE TO QUIT THE MARTIAL WORLD BECAUSE OF BEING SKILLED AND HAVING POPULARITY?

AND THAT HE IS TOO POPULAR AMONG FRIENDS
MASTER LILI ABSOLUTELY HAS TO WASH HIS HANDS OFF THE MARTIAL ARTS REALM, BECAUSE HE IS TOO SKILLED IN HIS MARTIAL ARTS

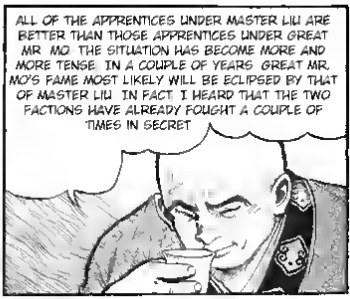
HOW IS HE TAKING THE SITUATION AS A WHOLE?
WHAT INTERNAL STRIFE?

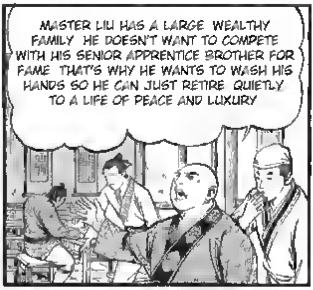

HE'S RETIRING SO THERE WON'T BE INTERNAL STRIFE WITHIN THE SECT! HE'S BEING PRUDENT AND CONSIDERING ABOUT THE SWORD SCHOOL'S SITUATION AS A WHOLE!
PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW THE INSIDE STORY WILL BE CONFUSED. OF COURSE, BUT ONCE YOU LEARN THE SECRETS YOU WON'T THINK IT STRANGE AT ALL

BUT MASTER LIU CAN GET FIVE
GREAT MR. MO CAN PIERCE THREE WILD GEESE WITH ONE THRUST


OUTSIDERS ALL CONSIDER MASTER LIU THE 2ND BEST FIGHTER IN THE SECT, BUT EVERYBODY WITHIN THE SWORD SCHOOL KNOWS THAT MASTER LIU'S PROFICIENCY IN THE THIRTY-SIX MOVES OF THE WIND-TWIRLING GEESE-FELLING SWORDPLAY IS FAR GREATER THAN THE SECT'S LEADER, GREAT MR. MO.

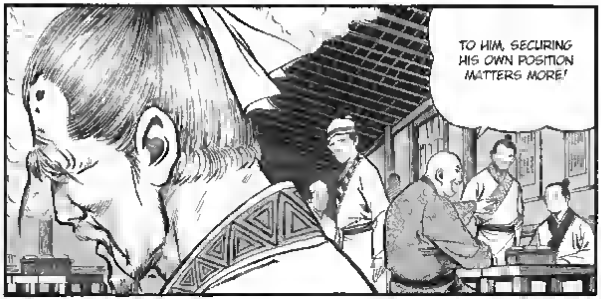
IS THAT SO?!


ALL OF THE APPRENTICES UNDER MASTER LIU ARE BETTER THAN THOSE APPRENTICES UNDER GREAT MR. MO. THE SITUATION HAS BECOME MORE AND MORE TENSE. IN A COUPLE OF YEARS, GREAT MR. MO'S FAME MOST LIKELY WILL BE ECLIPSED BY THAT OF MASTER LIU. IN FACT, I HEARD THAT THE TWO FACTIONS HAVE ALREADY FOUGHT A COUPLE OF TIMES IN SECRET


MASTER LIU HAS A LARGE WEALTHY FAMILY. HE DOESN'T WANT TO COMPETE WITH HIS SENIOR APPRENTICE BROTHER FOR FAME. THAT'S WHY HE WANTS TO WASH HIS HANDS SO HE CAN JUST RETIRE QUIETLY TO A LIFE OF PEACE AND LUXURY

THEN GREAT MR. MO IS REALLY MAKING A GREAT MISTAKE BY FORCING MASTER LIU TO RETIRE. ISN'T HE WEAKENING THE POWER OF HIS OWN SCHOOL?

I SEE, SO THAT'S HOW IT IS. HOW BROAD MINDED OF OLD MASTER LIU.

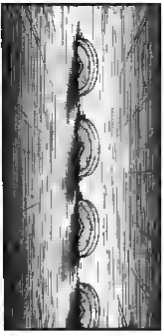

TO HIM, SECURING HIS OWN POSITION MATTERS MORE!

沙沙
東韓晴
一咚——咚——咚——

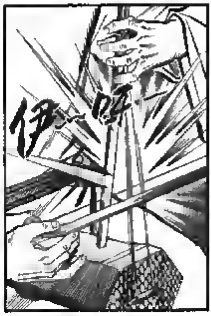
TN: GENERALS OF THE YANG FAMILY IS A COLLECTION OF CHINESE FOLKLORE, PLAYS AND NOVELS ON A HISTORICAL MILITARY FAMILY FROM THE EARLIER YEARS OF IMPERIAL CHINA'S SONG DYNASTY (960-1279). THE STORIES RECOUNT THE UNFLINCHING LOYALTY AND THE REMARKABLE BRAVERY OF THE YANGS AS THEY SACRIFICED THEMSELVES TO DEFEND THEIR COUNTRY FROM FOREIGN MILITARY POWERS, NAMELY THE KHITAN-RULED LIAO DYNASTY (907-1125) AND TANGUT-RULED WESTERN XIA (1038-1227). THE MOSTLY FICTIONAL SAGA WAS BASED ON THE LIVES OF HISTORICAL CHARACTERS YANG YE AND HIS CHILDREN.

THIS STREET PERFORMER'S SINGING... THERE'S SOMETHING CHILLING ABOUT IT.
AS THOUGH COMPLEMENTING THE MELANCHOLIC PERFORMANCE PUT ON BY THE OLD MAN.
OUTSIDE THE INN, THE RAIN BEGAN POURING ERRATICALLY
TAKE THIS MONEY AND SCRAM!
STOP ANNOYING PEOPLE WITH THAT GHASTLY PERFORMANCE.

UPON THE GOLDEN SAND BEACH, THE DOUBLE DRAGONS MET LOST THE BATTLE



GREAT MR. MO SHOULD BE SATISFIED
HOW COULD HE SHOW UP? THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MR. MO AND MASTER LIU IS LIKE THAT OF WATER AND FIRE. THEY'D START A FIGHT THE MINUTE THEY SAW EACH OTHER. MASTER LIU HAS ALREADY GIVEN GROUND

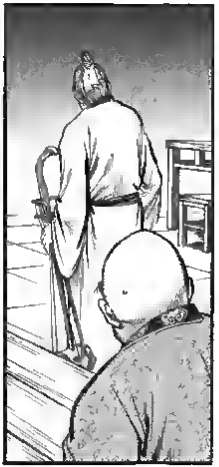


THE YOUNG LAD HAS CAUSED GREAT TROUBLE....
小東人
閣下ヲ
困ラス大禍ト

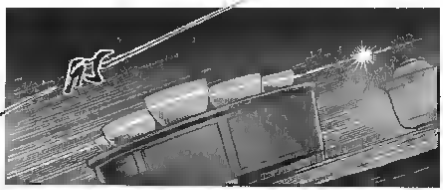
BALDER-
DASH!

WHAT DO YOU
WANT, OLD
MAN?

WHY YOU!



HUNDREDS OF TRANSFORMATIONS, THOUSANDS OF ILLUSIONS; THE 13 FACADES OF SOUTH MT. HENG'S HORIZONS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WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT THIS OLD MAN HAD A SWORD HIDDEN WITHIN HIS HUGIN!

LITTER BALDER-DASH!

COMPLETE LITTER BALDERDASH!

G-GUYS, LOOK!

嚓！
喔！

沙沙……

ONE STRIKE OF THE BLADE AT ALL SEVEN CUPS AND NONE OF THE CUPS MOVED AT ALL!
WHO ON EARTH IS THAT OLD GEEZER?

NO WAY!

LUCKILY THE OLD GENTLEMAN SHOWED MERCY UPON YOU OTHERWISE YOUR HEAD AND NECK WOULD HAVE BEEN JUST LIKE THESE CUPS

THAT'S THE LEADER OF SOUTH HENG SWORD SCHOOL. THE NIGHT RAIN OF XIAOXIANG GREAT MISTER MO HIMSELF!

OLD GENTLE-MAN?

H-HOW DID YOU KNOW?
T-THAT'S THE GREAT MISTER MO?!
W-WHAT?!

AND HIS ICONIC PIECE, THE "NIGHT RAIN OF XIAOXIANG" IS KNOWN TO OVERWHELM LISTENERS.
MR MO LOVES PLAYING THE HUQIN

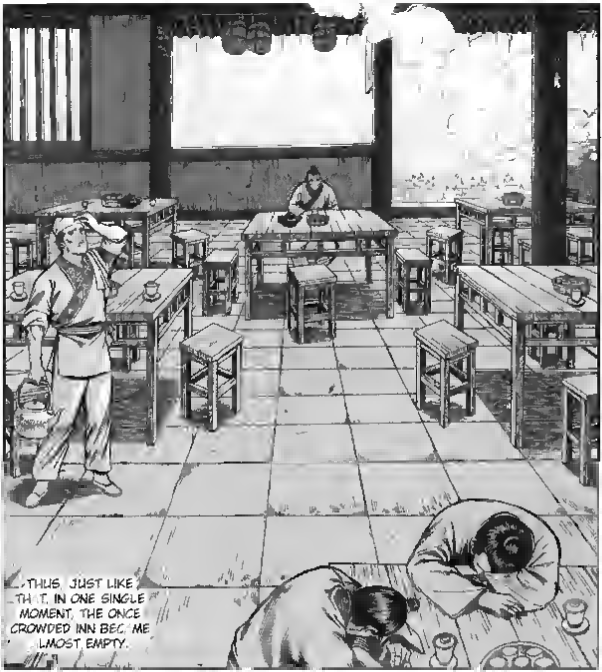
OF COURSE I'D KNOW

HOW CAN YOU FOLKS COME TO MT HENG CITY AND NOT KNOW THIS?
HIS MARTIAL ARTS HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS "A SWORD CONCEALED WITHIN THE INSTRUMENT WHILST THE SOUND OF MUSIC RESONATES FROM HIS BLADE".

SO HE SLICED SEVEN CUPS IN DEMONSTRATION. IF HE COULD EVEN SLICE THOSE WITH SUCH EASE, HOW HARD DO YOU THINK IT WOULD BE TO GET WILD GEESE? HENCE WHY HE SAID THAT YOU WERE TALKING NONSENSE.
WHILE MR. MO COULD ONLY MANAGE THREE.
THAT GENTLEMAN OVER THERE SAID EARLIER THAT MASTER LIU COULD PIERCE FIVE WILD GEESE WITH ONE THRUST.

.....

SINCE NONE OF THEM HAD DISSENTED WHEN THE SHORT FAT MAN WAS DEFAMING MR. MO, THEY WERE WORRIED THAT PERHAPS THEY HAD PLANTED THE SEEDS OF TROUBLE, SO THEY ALL PAID THEIR BILLS AND LEFT HURRIEDLY.
HAVING SEEN THE LEVEL OF SWORDPLAY DISPLAYED BY NIGHT RAIN OF XIAOXIANG, GREAT MR 'MO', THE PEOPLE IN THE INN SUDDENLY FELT A CHILL SETTLE IN THEIR HEARTS


...THUS JUST LIKE THAT, IN ONE SINGLE MOMENT, THE ONCE CROWDED INN BECAME ALMOST EMPTY.

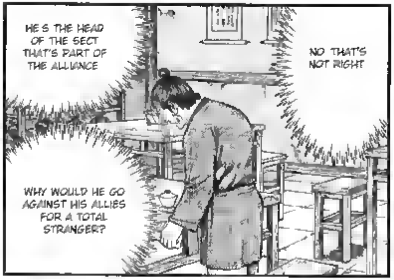
IF I HAD NEVER LEFT FUZHOU I WOULD HAVE NEVER KNOWN THAT THERE COULD BE PEOPLE WITH SUCH OUTSTANDING SKILLS IN THE WORLD

YET WITH A MERE WAVE OF HIS SWORD, HE MANAGED TO SLICE THE TOP OF ALL SEVEN CUPS SO CLEANLY.
THE OLD MAN HAD BEEN SO WRETCHED LOOKING THAT IT SEEMED AS THOUGH SOMEONE COULD HAVE PUSHED HIM OVER WITH A SINGLE FINGER.

IF I WERE TO BECOME A STUDENT OF THIS OLD MAN AND LEARN HIS MARTIAL ARTS, I MIGHT ACTUALLY HAVE A CHANCE TO AVENGE OUR AGENCY

I WAS BUT A FROG WATCHING THE SKY FROM INSIDE A WELL
TO THINK THAT AT THAT TIME I THOUGHT THAT AT BEST
THE MARTIAL ARTISTS OUT THERE WOULD BE ON PAR WITH MY FATHER

THAT'S RIGHT. WHY COULDN'T I GO AND FIND THIS GREAT MR. MO AND IMPLORE UPON HIM TO RESCUE MY PARENTS AND TAKE ME IN AS HIS DISCIPLE?


HE'S THE HEAD OF THE SECT THAT'S PART OF THE ALLIANCE
NO THAT'S NOT RIGHT
WHY WOULD HE GO AGAINST HIS ALLIES FOR A TOTAL STRANGER?

HAHA, 6TH SHI-DI
CAN'T YOU SEE THE REST OF OUR FELLOW APPRENTICES ARE ALL ALREADY HERE?

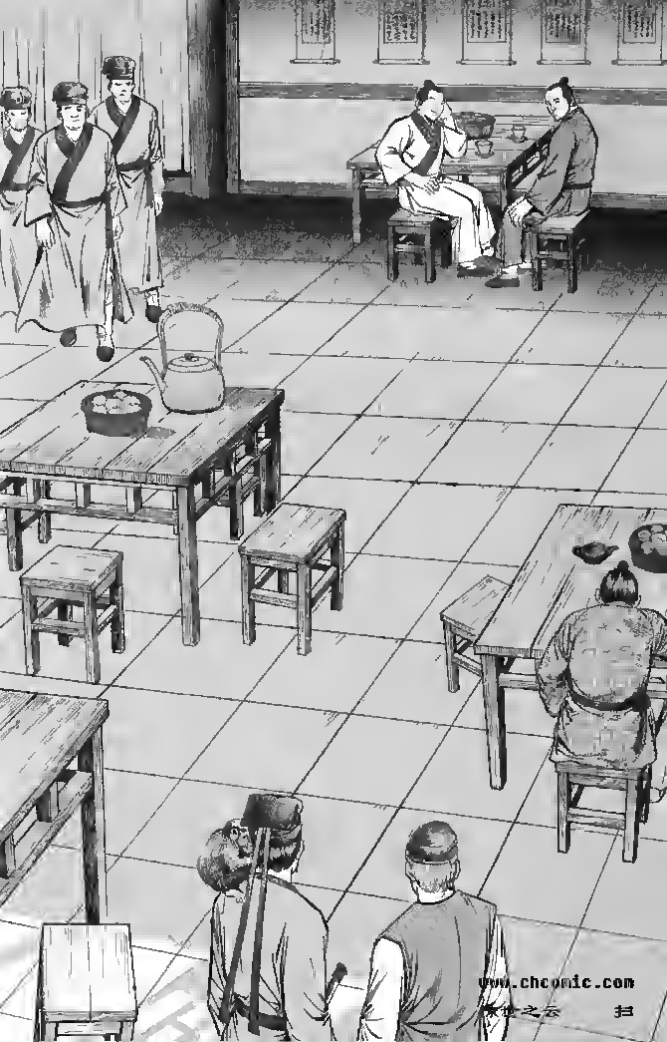
OH MY, SO GOOD TO SEE YOU 2ND SHI-GE!
I'VE BEEN WALKING AROUND THE CITY FOR ALMOST A DAY AND NOT A SINGLE SIGHT OF A MT HUA DISCIPLE TO BE SEEN!
SO TIRED!

THAT VOICE... ISN'T IT THAT OLD MAN SA FROM THE INN...?!

IT IS HIM!

2ND SHI-GE!

LAU DENUO
THE 2ND DISCIPLE OF MT HUA SECT
THAT OLD MAN SA RUNNING THE INN IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF FUZHOU CITY IS NONE OTHER THAN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GAO GENMING
LIANG FA
SHI DAIZI

YING BAILIU
TAO JUN

WHERE DID ALL THESE PEOPLE COME FROM? ARE THEY ALL FROM MT HUA SECT?

SO YOU LOT WERE HIDING IN HERE ALL THIS WHILE! NO WONDER I COULDN'T FIND YOU!

HE TOLD US TO MEET EVERYONE AT MT HENG CITY
WELL, I WAS INDEED WITH HER WHEN WE MET UP WITH OUR MASTER AT CHANGSHA.

2ND SHI-GE WHERE'S OUR LITTLE SHI-MEI? WASN'T SHE WITH YOU?

THAT YOUNGEST DISCIPLE THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT... IT'S MOST LIKELY THAT UGLY LOOKING GIRL.
AND NOW SHE WOULDN'T STOP WANDERING AROUND THE STREETS LOOKING AROUND AT THE SHOPS. I TOLD HER I'LL WAIT FOR HER HERE.
THE MOMENT SHE STEPPED INTO CITY, THE STALLS GOT HER ATTENTION
ANYWAY, YOU KNOW WHAT OUR LITTLE SHI-MEI IS LIKE.

茶
SHEESH, IT JUST WOULDN'T STOP RAINING.
GOODNESS I BROUGHT THIS ALONG.
OR I WOULD HAVE BEEN DRENCHED

OH, YOU'RE HERE!

DAUGHTER OF MT HUA SECT'S LEADER YUE BUQUN
YUE LING SHAN

GOING BY THE VOICE, IT'S NO DOUBT THAT UGLY GIRL FROM THE INN, BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HER FACE? HOW DID SHE BECOME THIS PRETTY?